

## Technology and Telecom

During the past few decades we've witnessed revolutionary developments in the telecommunications sector. The advent of the internet, the proliferation of the cell phone, the availability of DSL, and the potential of VOIP have substantially contributed to our nation's economic growth while dramatically changing how we live our lives. Many of these advances have been positive, but with them have come unforeseen problems, such as spam.

In Congress, I have worked to ensure Southwest Washington's rural areas receive state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure, like high-speed broadband, as expeditiously and cost-effectively as possible. I believe this sort of high-tech infrastructure investment promotes economic growth. I have also strongly supported policies that encourage competition and innovation in the telecommunications sector. I believe increased competition will further stimulate economic growth and ultimately benefit consumers in Southwest Washington and throughout our nation.

### Spam

Spam is not merely a nuisance. It exposes children to inappropriate material, chokes our nation's broadband infrastructure, and costs our nation millions of dollars annually. Congressman Baird strongly supports legislative efforts to prevent spam, such as the CAN SPAM Act, which was signed into law. This legislation prohibits the distribution of unsolicited messages unless the message contains a valid e-mail address, conspicuously displayed, to which a recipient may send notice of his or her desire not to receive further messages. Additionally, the bill prevents a spam message from containing any false or inaccurate identification information in the domain name or subject text.

Unfortunately, most consumers have not experienced a significant reduction in spam. While Congressman Baird supported the CAN SPAM Act as a first step in combating spam, he believes Congress must pass stronger legislation. To this end, the Congressman has co-sponsored the most comprehensive anti-spam bill in Congress, the Anti-Spam Act. This bipartisan legislation requires all commercial email to contain: 1) an identifier that the message is an advertisement or solicitation; 2) notice of the opportunity for a recipient to opt-out; 3) a return email address or website through which the consumer may opt-out; and 4) the physical street address of the sender. Passage of these measures would be a giant step toward cleaning up cyberspace and protecting consumers.

## Media Consolidation

Consolidation continues to dominate the media industry. It has the potential to suppress the diversity of opinions expressed on our nation's print media and airwaves. In the past 20 years, an increasing number of local television stations have been purchased by big networks, family-owned newspapers have disappeared, and a handful of corporations have monopolized our nation's radio programming. In addition, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has taken significant steps to significantly relax media ownership restrictions, allowing further consolidation. Having heard from numerous constituents on this issue, Congressman Baird has cosponsored legislation to preserve media diversity.

## Telemarketing

Congressman Baird shares the frustration of many Americans who receive frequent telephone solicitations. As a result, he has consistently supported legislation to establish a national "do not call" list of people who do not want to receive telemarketing calls, and he voted in favor of the Do-Not-Call Implementation Act. This bill authorized the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to collect fees to establish and enforce a national "do-not-call" registry. The registry became effective on October 1, 2003. Congressman Baird is pleased Congress required fees associated with maintaining the registry to be recouped from telemarketers who violate the Act's provisions. This represents a fiscally sound approach to funding the registry which ensures its solvency without requiring assistance from the federal Treasury. To sign-up for the registry online, logon to <https://www.donotcall.gov>, or call toll-free, 1-888-382-1222.

## Amateur Radio

Congressman Baird strongly believes that amateur radio operators provide a valuable resource to our region, particularly in the event of an emergency or disaster. Having participated in emergency drills with amateur radio operators, Congressman Baird has witnessed firsthand their contribution to our communities. Consequently, Congressman Baird is a supporter of the Amateur Radio Spectrum Protection Act. This legislation would prohibit the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from repossessing spectrum currently allocated to amateur radio operations, without providing equivalent replacement spectrum for amateur radio use.

## Rural Broadband

The lack of state-of-the-art broadband service in rural communities hinders economic growth. Congressman Baird is committed to ensuring

rural Southwest Washington communities have access to high-speed broadband technology. He supports the bipartisan Broadband Internet Access Act, which provides incentives to businesses to expand the availability of high-speed broadband. Specifically, the legislation provides a 10 to 20 percent tax credit to businesses that deploy state-of-the-art broadband infrastructure in rural and underserved communities. This is the sort of targeted, infrastructure-intensive tax breaks that most effectively stimulate economic growth and generate jobs. Not only will the act of building the equipment and laying the infrastructure require a variety of companies to hire new employees, but providing broadband to all regions of our country removes one of the significant competitive disadvantages with which rural businesses must contend.

## Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Congressman Baird acknowledges the value in continuing to support the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which leverages federal investment to receive more than 80 percent of additional funds from public viewers, as well as public and private organizations. CPB created the Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) around 1970 to provide educational and cultural programming to public television and radio stations across the nation.

In recent years, CPB has been slated for deep funding cuts by the Administration as well as the House majority. If Congress were to pass the proposed cuts, 221 stations in 43 states that specifically serve rural and minority communities would likely be the first affected. In many cases, these stations are the sole local broadcasting service available to many communities. They receive significantly higher funding from CPB - in some cases, as much as two-thirds of their budgets - because many of their listeners simply don't have the financial resources to provide support. If their funding is cut, there is a good chance these stations could not sustain themselves.

Congressman Baird has voted in support of preserving funding for CPB, and sent letters to Committee leaders advocating for local public television and radio stations. He is committed to maintaining access to public television and radio for all citizens in Southwest Washington, and will continue to fight for our local programs so they can continue to thrive.

## Identity Theft

The advent of the Internet has created an environment ripe for identity theft. Indeed, reports issued by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) consistently cite identity theft as the most common consumer complaint. Congressman Baird believes that Congress must strengthen existing consumer protection laws, many of which were enacted prior to the advent of the Internet. Congressman Baird has supported the Identity Theft and Financial Privacy Protection Act, which imposes stiffer penalties for those who commit identity theft and provides law enforcement with the resources necessary to combat such crimes.

Congressman Baird will continue to support legislation to crack-down on ID theft.

## Television Standards

Congressman Baird is concerned by the degradation of television standards. Too many of our young people watch too much television, and Congressman Baird fears television programs often set poor examples for our children. Congressman Baird is particularly concerned by the proliferation of violent and sexual content on network television. As a clinical psychologist, he understands well the potential impacts of such programs on child development.

The government has long maintained restrictions on the kind of material that may be broadcast during hours in which children are most likely to watch. Congressman Baird strongly supports such restrictions. However, he believes the primary responsibility for determining which television broadcasts come into one's home resides with the individual. Obviously, one may turn off programs that one finds offensive. And, one may choose not to patronize sponsors of offensive programming. Congressman Baird firmly believes in the principles of personal responsibility, and he also believes we must not fail to communicate such principles to our children as we seek to promote their development.

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Communications Commission

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Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection

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